

C 23
WASHINGTON POST
23 MAY 1977

Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

CIA: Our First Line of Defense

The Central Intelligence Agency deals in operations so secret that its waste paper is classified. Yet it receives more publicity than government agencies that advertise. The publicity has been so horrendous that many Americans are ready to abolish the CIA. They would like to forget the whole CIA saga as if it were a bad dream.

But in the nuclear age, the CIA has become our first line of defense. The tangled espionage web it has spun is probably essential to our national survival. For the safety of all of us, the nerve center in Washington needs to be kept informed about military moves and terrorist activities around the world.

President Carter, therefore, has assigned Starsfield Turner to salvage the CIA. Turner has instituted reforms that are designed to bring his unruly agency into line. He will concentrate on intelligence-gathering and restrict the covert operations that have given the CIA a bad international reputation.

Turner won't go so far as to abolish the Mission Impossible capability. He might want to use unorthodox methods, he said privately, to meet some future emergency. He raised the possibility, for example, that terrorists might get hold of nuclear weapons. The CIA might want to do more about it, he suggested, than spy on the terrorists.

But for all his good intentions, Turner may not be able to control the octopus he is supposed to head. It has more weaving, twisting arms than he can watch.

The CIA agents throughout the world are expected to obey orders

from Turner. But they have recruited local operatives, who have their own undercover contacts. At these lower, subterranean levels, the CIA cannot always control how its instructions are implemented.

The CIA's worldwide network involves people at all levels around the world. Local crime rings have provided services and information to the CIA. Yet the CIA neither created nor controls these underworld outfits.

Turner, who has a reputation for integrity, believes the CIA is not only an efficient but an essential organization. Some agents have gone beyond moral bounds; some have been fools. But others have been unsung heroes whose deeds surpass the most valorous in our history yet must remain unrecorded.

Footnote: During the Nixon era, the CIA joined other government agencies in a massive police action against us. The project was called "Operation Mudhen." At one point, the CIA used 18 radio cars to trail us. Agents set up a command post near our office and photographed everyone who entered it. Other agents used sophisticated electronic equipment to monitor our conversations.

This illegal harassment upset White House press secretary Jody Powell, who has checked with Turner to make sure nothing of this sort is going on under President Carter. The CIA chief assured Powell that "Operation Mudhen" has been suspended and that we are no longer under CIA surveillance.

Missing Witness — Primitivo Mijares is missing.

Two years ago, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos tried to bribe Mijares

to keep him from testifying before the U.S. Congress. We produced bank records on July 2, 1975, tracing the \$50,000 bribe to Trinidad Alconcel, the Philippines consul in San Francisco, who placed the money in a bank for Mijares.

The \$50,000 was withdrawn, however, after Mijares went ahead with his testimony. As a former journalistic hatchetman for Marcos, the witness told about tyranny in the Philippines. Then he asked for asylum in the United States; he would be killed, he said, if he were forced to return to Manila.

Yet astonishingly, the State Department never acted on his asylum request. The Justice Department also stalled on the bribe investigation. The last we heard from Mijares was a mysterious letter, postmarked last January from Honolulu. He wrote that he was about to take off on "a daring sortie to the Philippines."

Primitivo Mijares' fate remains a mystery. But the man who tried to bribe him, Trinidad Alconcel, has overcome his embarrassment. He slipped away from San Francisco after our story was published. But he has now turned up in Honolulu, with full credentials as the Philippines consul.

Who's News — Rep. Robert Kasten (R-Wisc.) has received a form letter from Vice President Mondale. The letter begs for funds "to assure that Democrats win majorities" in the 1978 House elections. "The party must . . . depend on you to join this effort," the Mondale letter urges. Congressman Kasten, a dyed-in-the-wool Republican, is unimpressed.